

**Written Testimony of Beka Apostolidis, RN, MS of Cromwell, CT,  
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Select Committee on Children,  
March 1, 2012**

Testimony in Support of:  
**HB 5218, AN ACT CONCERNING TOXIC FIRE RETARDANTS IN CHILDREN'S  
PRODUCTS**

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Urban, and honorable members of the Select Committee on Children,

My name is Beka Apostolidis. I am a resident of Cromwell CT. I write in strong support of HB 5218 An Act Concerning Toxic Fire Retardants in Children's Products.

The presence of toxic flame retardants that are known carcinogens in children's products is shocking! What's even worse is that the research shows no significant fire safety benefit from the use of these chemicals. I am very concerned about toxic chemicals in products in our homes and in our children's nurseries and particularly aware of children's exposure to these chemicals. Infants and young children have higher rates of exposure to chemicals due to their close proximity to products like changing pads, bassinette mattresses and nursing pillows and frequent hand-mouth behavior.

I've been a nurse for 16 years and am also clinical faculty at UCONN where I teach nursing students on the Oncology unit at Hartford Hospital. I am also a breast cancer survivor. Three years ago, at age 35, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. After going through two surgeries, radiation and oral tamoxifen, I am happy to say that my cancer is gone. I also lost my father to leukemia in 2004. My mother is a breast cancer survivor and we lost our 2 family dogs to cancer.

As a nurse and cancer survivor, I know that the cause of cancer and many serious diseases is still unclear. In my practice and as faculty, I see patients both young and old, battling serious cancers. But I do know that more and more scientific research shows that exposure to toxic chemicals is linked with these diseases. The 2010 President's Cancer Panel Report states 41% of Americans will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their lives and determined that the true burden of environmentally induced cancer has been grossly underestimated.<sup>1</sup> Childhood cancer, particularly brain cancer and leukemia, has risen 20% in the last thirty years. Although we are doing a better job at reducing mortality, this trend is alarming. Cancer is now the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for people under the age of 20.

While we can not do scientific human studies to prove causal relationships between exposure to toxic chemicals and cancer, there is an enormous amount of evidence that links exposure—even prenatally—to many diseases. In nursing, we are taught to use the

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<sup>1</sup> President's Cancer Panel Report Annual Report 2008-2009, "Reducing Environmental Cancer Risk-What We Can Do Now." (April 2010) (found in executive summary, letter to the President)

precautionary principle when there is risk of harm. We must apply this principle here. We should not allow manufacturers to use chemicals that are known carcinogens in products when there is no fire-safety benefit and when there are safe alternatives. We must take every step possible to reduce exposure to toxic carcinogens!

I applaud the members of the Select Committee on Children for raising this important issue and urge you to support its passage this session.

Sincerely,

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